

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kathy Sather, Kathy with a K, S-A-T-H-E-R. I am a 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher from Havre, and Havre's 2007/2008 teacher of the year. My husband Terry would have liked to have been here with me today. He is a longtime elementary teacher and basketball coach, and although school is not in session today in Havre, basketball practice is.

I am also speaking on behalf of Great Falls/Golden Triangle chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), and as treasurer of the PFLAG Montana State Council. PFLAG has 5 chapters and members all across Montana – many of whom travel 2 hrs or more each way, like Terry and I do, to attend a monthly meeting.

I spend 5 days a week with 20 1<sup>st</sup> graders and Terry sees about 220 students each day in his P.E. classes. Believe me, our students have taught us plenty. The most powerful lesson we have learned is the importance of community. In order for us to get to the business at hand each day, every child must feel safe and cared for. We encourage our students to honor and celebrate their differences. We want to believe that they are part of a larger community that will care for and protect each and every one of them.

We believe that Montanans are fair and value equality. That equality needs to be present for all of our children.

Terry and I are the parents of 3 children. If they are ever discriminated against because of their race or religion, they have legal recourse. They could file a complaint. It would be investigated. If found true there would be some form of remediation. This is not true for our daughter April. If she faces discrimination in Montana because she is a lesbian, that is perfectly legal. There is no investigation. There is no remedy.

Members of the Committee, who here would want any of your children to face discrimination? There are Montanans who are afraid – afraid if they are honest about who they truly are they will lose their jobs or be kicked out of their apartments, or be asked to leave a restaurant. Those of us present today – we are the people they are counting on. We are the people who can say we won't allow that fear to be present anymore. We want April to have what our other children have.

April tells us, "Always remember, we have love on our side." My husband Terry and I urge you to be part of a group that says yes. Yes to every one of our citizens. Yes – we will protect you against discrimination. Yes, to HB 252.

Thank you.